

3/2 Yung-ting, flood detention basins must be constructed on the middle courses. The Chinese Communist regime planned the construction of three flood detention basins; the reservoir at Kuan-ting, completed in 1954, is the most important. It serves to control flood waters, stores water for irrigation and for navigation, supplies drinking water to Peking, and is a source of power for the generation of electricity. If we estimate the benefits in irrigation alone, the reservoir, in addition to safeguarding some 800,000 shih-mou (133,333 acres) from the possibility of flood, has helped to increase the land under irrigation by some 2,000,000 shih-mou (333,333 acres).²⁴ The Fen River Flood Control System in Shansi Province, completed in August 1955, has increased the amount of irrigated farm land by 1,600,000 shih-mou (266,667 acres).²⁵

• 242 Other factors which have tended to increase agricultural production are a number of technical improvements introduced in the cotton-growing regions of North China. The

24. Ibid.

25. Hua-chiao Jih-pao [China Daily News], New York, Aug. 3, 1955.

242 Communist regime, the Communists assert, has provided the farmers with modern farming implements, a quantity of seeds of good quality, and bean cake and chemical fertilizers. Methods have been developed to combat locust invasions, which have plagued China for more than 2,500 years.²⁶ In 1951, locusts swarmed over 15 million acres in Hopei and neighboring provinces; in 1952, locusts swarmed on an additional 3 million acres, destroying crops. The Communists organized teams of peasants and equipped them with benzine hexachloride powder, other insecticides, and equipment. In 1953, planes were used to spray the crops. The Communists assert that the threat of locusts no longer plague the Chinese farmer.²⁷

407 If the Chinese farmer has been furnished with modern farm implements -- or has the use of such instruments, owned by the local producers' co-operative or mutual-aid team -- there is a possibility that efficiency has increased as the Communists insist. It has been reported that the North China Agricultural Machinery Works, on the outskirts of Peking,

26. People's China, Peking, Sept. 1, 1953, p. 26.

27. Ibid., p. 27.

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severe that the government remitted three-tenths of the grain taxes. In 1858 the largest hailstones were like rice bowls and many of the roof tiles were broken. In May, 1915, hail fell for an hour and damaged the wheat crop of 10 villages. The highest loss was 70 per cent; the lowest under 40 per cent. There was still hope for a fall crop, so the government remitted only 40 per cent of the taxes of one village, 30 per cent for two, and 20 per cent for four villages.

Hail added to the damage from flood in both 1917 and 1920. In 1917 it affected 335 villages and 597,045 mu of land, 42 per cent of the land and 74 per cent of the villages. Relief and remission of taxes were included in the flood relief program.

Some of the hailstones that fell on July 8, 1918, were reported to be as large as eggs and four to five inches thick. In 1923 the largest stones were the size of eggs; the smallest the size of bullets. Forty villages and 16,541 mu of land were affected.

Ting Hsien lies in a region that is not usually affected by frost before harvest time. Only three serious frosts are mentioned. In 463 the damage in the seventh month was so extensive that the taxes were remitted. In 1882 the buckwheat was damaged by frost in the eighth month. In 1922 the spring rains held off until June so many of the fields were planted with buckwheat. In the eighth month, when the buckwheat was in bloom, a storm brought cold and frost. The entire hsien was affected. Ninety-nine villages had 50 to 60 per cent damage. For these villages all of the extra taxes and one-tenth of the regular taxes were remitted. The rest of the regular taxes were to be collected during the next two years.

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Locusts were an ever present threat to the Ting Hsien crops as a few were seen almost every year. Some were reported every year except one from 1915 to 1922. In some years only a few villages reported any damage: in 1918 only one village. It was six villages in 1922, 13 in 1919, and 18 in 1915. In 1920, at the time of the big drought, 20 per cent of the villages saw some locusts and the crops were damaged in 64 villages, 14 per cent.

Only the years of serious damage were listed before 1911. From 838 to 1891 only 14 years were listed as bad locust years, an average of one every 75 years. In the fall of 838 the grass and leaves were all eaten. In the fifth month of 1292 the leaves of the mulberry trees were eaten so no silk worms could be raised that year. In the spring of 1591 all the

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crops were eaten. The worst damage was in the area to the south of the city.

In 1705 the summer locusts flew in such swarms that they covered the sun, but it is reported that they were soon killed. In 1825 so many locusts were flying together that the sun could not shine through. They stayed for three days.

Killing the locusts or scaring them away was about the only protection the farmers had. As soon as any locusts were seen everyone turned out. Gongs and other noise-makers were beaten to keep the locusts from settling on the crops. Beaters of all sorts, spades, forks, flat pieces of wood, shoe soles nailed on sticks, brooms, and bundles of willow twigs were used to kill the locusts. Ditches were dug and the locusts driven into them were buried there. Fires were lighted at night to attract the insects so they could be killed.

The government often offered a bounty to encourage the people to kill the locusts. In the spring of 1915 the rate was 10 cash (0.73 cents) per catty. Only 762 catties were caught. The bounty, plus some special prizes amounting to \$3.50, brought the expenditure to \$9.05. In the fall of the same year 5,945 catties were caught. As they were caught at the border of the hsien, the reward was doubled. It totaled \$82. Eleven dollars food money for the police for the days they helped with the work made the total expenditure \$93.

In 1920 64 villages caught 30,656 catties, some 20 tons. That year the reward was 50 cash per catty. It was to be paid half from the tax funds and half from funds secured by the village heads. The police expenditure amounted to \$155.73.

There was considerable damage to the main fall crops in 1921. In 1922 the crops of six villages were attacked, but the locusts were quickly caught, so there was not widespread damage. The loss on some 13,859 mu was about 60 per cent. One-tenth of the taxes on that land was remitted, and the remainder spread over the two following years.

Cholera and plague were not frequent visitors to Ting Hsien, at least in epidemic proportions, as only eight visitations were reported in the list of calamities, and three of those were in 1918, 1919, and 1920. Plague was reported in 1554, 1581, 1821, 1918, and 1919, cholera in 1885, 1895, and 1920.

In 1918 Ting Hsien was one of the plague quarantine centers established along the railroad. All small stations were closed and passengers

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